

Current Challenges of Minority Policy in Slovak Republic

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Abstract: This paper attempts to identify current challenges of minority policy in Slovak republic. First it describes and examines current state of minorities in Slovak republic and provides an overview of the development of the composition of Slovak population in Slovak republic by nationality. The paper then focuses on minority policy forming since the establishment of Slovak republic, by summarizing most significant milestones in the development regarding the minority rights guarantee and the protection of minorities. Based on the reports regarding the progress in minority policy together with the information about the current state of minorities, the author of the paper identifies and addresses the most urgent limitations of the minority policy of Slovak republic and features that this minority policy is lacking. Provided theoretical analysis of the addressed challenges should serve as both an explanation for reasons of failures of minority policy and as a discussion giving some ideas on how to improve minority policy in Slovakia.

Keywords: challenges, cultural capital, Hungarian minority, minorities, minority policy, Roma minority, security zation, Slovak republic, social capital.

1. INTRODUCTION

Minority policy in Slovak republic has only begun forming twenty-two years ago with the establishment of the Slovak republic. Currently, despite of the fact that it is based on several laws, regulations and charters, many of which are of international importance, it still cannot be described as well functioning and efficient. In recent years, attention has been increasingly drawn especially to the issues regarding minority-majority and minority-state relations as well as regarding the need to better the socioeconomic status of some specific minorities. Since the society in Slovak republic is to be considered ethnically heterogeneous and multicultural, the inability to fully guarantee minorities their rights and non-discrimination and at the same time to ensure good minority-majority relations as well as minority-state relations, is to be considered an urgent problem that needs to be addressed.

For this reason the main aim of this paper is to identify, assess and finally to address current challenges of minority policy in Slovak republic.

In order to do so, the author of the paper provides a description of the current state of minorities in Slovak republic that is mostly based on statistical data obtained from the reports of the Slovak Institute of Informatics and Statistics (INFOSTAT, 1991, 2001) and of the Statistical Office of Slovak republic - ŠÚ SR (Katuša, et al., 2014). The other highly relevant source frequently cited in this paper is the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) (Lajčáková et al., 2012, 2013, 2014) and its annual reports on minority policy in Slovakia, which also provide necessary statistical data as well as information regarding current state of the minority issues in Slovak society. In order to achieve the aim of the paper, the author at the same time summarizes the main changes regarding minority policy implementation since its establishment, using mostly reports of the European Commission on the progress that Slovakia made towards accession to

the European Union (Commission 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002) and resolutions of the Advisory Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the progress made towards the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2001, 2006, 2011).

Based on the development of minority policy and the monitoring of its progress together with the information about the current status of minorities in Slovak republic, the author of the paper identifies, analyses and addresses the limitations and challenges of the minority policy in Slovakia. The author also provides a theoretical explanation (which is to a great extent based on abstraction and simplification) of the necessity to address these challenges on a national level, using mostly Kymlicka's (2002) approach on "desecuritization" of political spaces, Bourdieu's theory on cultural capital (Ondrejko, 2011) and Putnam's theory on social capital (Vašečka, 2007). This theoretical analysis applied on the identified limitations and challenges of the minority policy in Slovakia leads to formulating some ideas on how to improve the implementation of minority policy in Slovakia.

2. CURRENT STATE OF MINORITIES IN SLOVAK REPUBLIC

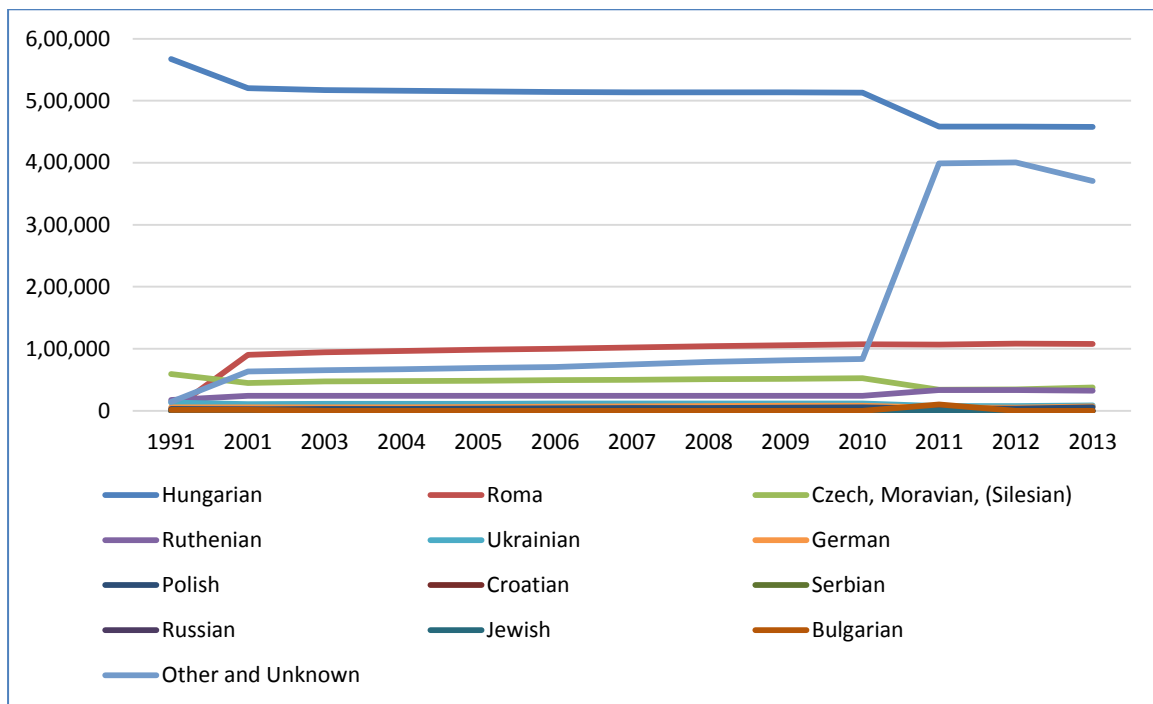
There are numerous definitions of the term minority, depending on the type of minority, e.g. religious, ethnic, national, linguistic, sexual etc. In order to provide basic understanding of the term minority, national and ethnic minority which are among the most common used terms on a daily basis, the author of the paper uses definitions explained in the Oxford English Dictionary. Minority is being described as "a small group of people within a community or country, differing from the main population, race, religion, language, or political persuasion" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). Ethnic minority is defined as "a group within a community which has different national or cultural traditions from the main population" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012). National minority is seen as "a minority group within a country felt to be distinct from the majority because of historical differences of language, religion, culture, etc." (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012).

As stated in the Annual report on Minority policy in Slovakia in 2013 that has been published by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, the Slovak legal system however does not constitutionally define the terms national minority or ethnic group, nor does it specify the difference between these two categories but most of the legislation relating to minorities use the term national minorities (Lajčáková et al., 2014). Moreover, the conditions a group of people has to fulfil in order to be officially recognized as a minority in Slovak republic are not yet clearly defined. The only clear condition for granting a person his/her minority rights is, according to the Constitution of Slovak republic, Slovak citizenship. Apart from that, there are no other objective criteria like different language, culture or multiplicity to fulfil. But more importantly, this only condition is in contradiction to international law that classifies the minority rights among fundamental human rights (Lajčáková et al., 2014). The number of citizens belonging to a certain nationality, or to a certain national minority is traditionally determined through census in Slovakia (so far there have been two censuses since the establishment of the Slovak republic - in 2001 and 2011; the data of other years used in Figure 1 have been obtained from the survey held by Statistical Office of Slovak republic – Katuša, et al., 2014). The results of the census are crucial in implementation of minority rights, since the data from census form the basis on which funds to support minority institutions are being allocated and linguistic and participatory rights are being applied (Lajčáková et al., 2013). According to the definition of the United Nations, nationality is "a group of citizens of a State, constituting a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that State, endowed with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law. (Deschenes, 1985)" (Katuša, et al., 2014). Regarding Slovak republic this definition is considered to be the appropriate one, since the characteristics of minorities that have been specified are according to the author of the paper common to all of the minorities living on the Slovak territory. Despite of the fact that they actually are very different, this definition provides their common features and behaviour.

Currently there are 13 officially recognized national minorities or ethnic groups in Slovak republic - namely Bulgarian, Czech, Moravian¹, Croatian, German, Hungarian, Jewish, Polish, Roma, Ruthenian, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian - that have their representatives in the Council of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups of the Government Council of Human

¹ Czech and Moravian national minorities together with Silesian minority are mostly put together in one group when presenting the results of a census, because of their similarity and the fact that they all come from the neighbouring Czech Republic.

Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality (Jedličková, 2014). As observable in Figure 1, Hungarian and Roma minority are the most numerous. In 2013 the Hungarian minority accounted for 8,5% of the total Slovak population, Roma for 2% and other minorities in Slovakia represented less than 1% of the citizens (Katuša, et al., 2014). There was a significant increase in the amount of population that indicated belonging to *other and unknown* nationality in census 2011. The reason for this, according to the Centre for the Research of ethnicity and Culture (Lajčáková et al., 2013), might be that the census is still based on (the myth of) exclusive identity, which means that it does not allow a person to indicate belonging to multiple national identities; this is quite a problematic aspect of the census, since it does not give us clear picture of the composition of the population in Slovak republic by nationality (See Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Lajčáková et al., 2013). The other significant change compared to the census in 2001 was the amount of population (62 061 people) that indicated belonging to the Hungarian minority, which was 1,2% less. Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture (Lajčáková et al., 2013) stresses that the reason for this development is the fact that the dynamic minority policy in Slovakia pictures other minorities (especially Hungarian minority) as a threat to Slovak nation and a threat to the territorial integrity of Slovakia in order to support and to some extent to excuse its restrictive measures such as restriction to possess double citizenship or the State Language Act which significantly promotes linguistic assimilation (Lajčáková et al., 2013). The author pays more attention to this issue later in the paper, when assessing current challenges of minority policy in Slovakia.



Source: INFOSTAT 1991, INFOSTAT 2001, Katuša, et al., 2014

Figure: 1 Composition of the minority population in Slovak republic by nationality 1991-2013

Remark: Apart from the fact that there was no sovereign Slovak republic in 1991, the census was separately realized for the Slovak territory. For this reason, the author has considered this information to be valid for demonstration of the development of the composition of the population on the territory of Slovak republic, even more when taking into account that data for the years 1992, 1993 and 2000 were not available.

National minorities that are present within the Slovak territory are different in many characteristics such as rate of self-identification or historical development etc. Wolff (2002) for example, based on different characteristics of minorities distinguishes [within the context of Central and Eastern Europe] three types of minorities – external, transnational and indigenous. Within the territory of Slovak republic, two of the types of ethnic minorities are to be found. Hungarians in Slovakia according to Wolff (2002) belong to the external minority, since the external minority as he describes it, is a

minority that, while living on the territory of one state (host-state) is ethnically akin to the titular nation of another, often neighbouring, state (kin-state), in this case Hungary. The other type of minority which is to be found on the Slovak territory is transnational minority that Wolff (2002) defines as an ethnic group whose homelands stretch across several different states without it forming the titular nation in any of them. This description fits to the Roma minority. Indigenous minorities that are not to be found in Slovakia can be set apart from the former two as ethnic groups living in their ancestral homelands in only one state of which they are not the titular nation (Wolff, 2002). Important remark regarding the difference of minorities that are to be found (not only) within the territory of Slovak republic according to the author of this paper is that it is necessary to know and to understand the specifics of each minority in order to form an appropriate minority policy, which is quite challenging. In the following text the author describes the development of minority policy since the establishment of Slovak republic in order to be able to identify its challenges later on.

3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MINORITY POLICY FORMING SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Taking ethnic heterogeneity into account, the topic of minority rights has been central to both public and political debate ever since the establishment of the first Czechoslovak republic (Lajčáková et al., 2012). Slovak republic is, comparing to the other member states of the European Union, still a relatively young state that came to its existence in 1993 by the dissolution of the former Czechoslovak republic. The author of the paper assumes that the fact that it is still a relatively young state plays an important role in the current state of its minority policy, meaning that the time to develop a strong minority policy from which would benefit both minority groups and the Slovak (titular) nation has been too short.

According to Smetanková (2012), after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia had to deal with the minority issues by itself, especially with the increasing requirements for the improvement in minority rights protection, since apart from the Hungarian, Czech, Moravian (and Silesian) minorities the absolute number of minorities on the Slovak territory after the establishment of Slovak republic increased (See Figure 1). This was an uneasy task for “a newly formed – young state that gradually had to cope not only with forming of state-building and national policies but also and above all with building of its own national identity” (Smetanková, 2012).

What’s more, Slovakia was at the same time trying to become a member of the European Union which meant further economic and political changes during the integration process at the end of which was Slovak republic, as every other member state, supposed to “surrender” some of its sovereign competencies to the European Union. This situation, the author of the paper assumes, could have created the need to strengthen the Slovak national identity as much as possible which in 1997 (EURACTIV, 2010) resulted in failure of Slovak republic to fulfil the political Copenhagen criteria, specifically in lack of respect for human rights and democracy, lack of respect for minorities and their insufficient protection.

After 1998 parliamentary elections the situation changed as European Union considered the result of the elections to be positive development towards the EU integration.² In the aftermath of parliamentary elections in 1998 Slovakia regained its status of an EU candidate country. Based on the decision of the European Council meeting in Luxembourg in 1997 (European Council, 1998) the Commission was requested to make regular reports on the progress made towards accession by each of the candidate countries. The monitoring of the Commission provides quite good and exact overview of the minority policy forming. Therefore, the summary of the most significant conclusions of the Commission regarding minority rights and the protection of minorities in the Slovak republic drawn up from all of the reports (together five) in the span of time 1998-2002 (See Table 1) allowed the author to observe the development of the minority policy in Slovakia from the point when its candidacy to the European Union (and NATO as well) became serious.

² The parliamentary elections resulted in forming of a coalition under the Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda which “marked a new course in relation to the Hungarian minority. The party representing Slovakia’s ethnic Hungarians – the Party of the Hungarian Coalition – became a member of the government. Moreover, in summer 1999 the parliament passed the new law on the use of minority languages. Whilst several long-term problematic political issues, such as the status of the Roma minority remained open, the overall nature of domestic politics changed in important ways with the departure of Vladimír Mečiar-led coalition” (Bilčík, 2001)

Table: 1 Protection of minorities in Slovak republic – conclusions of the Commission 1998-2002

Issue of the report	Most significant conclusions of the Commission
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • o progress on the adoption of minority language legislation³ • o significant change in the protection of minorities
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignificant progress in the area of minority rights and the protection of minorities • ppointment of a Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, National Minorities and Regional Development from the Hungarian Coalition Party • stablishment of a Committee for Human Rights and National Minorities (including a Commission for Roma issues) • reation of Minorities units within the Ministries of Culture and Education and within the Office of Government • estructuring of a Government Council for National and Ethnic Minorities to an advisory body to Government (representatives of all minorities) • option of the Law on the Use of Minority Languages in official Communications⁴
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further progress in developing approaches to tackle the problems of minorities • Establishment of the list of 656 municipalities where the Law on the Use of Minority Languages in Official Communications applies • Adoption of an action plan to prevent all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized minorities in Slovakia (numbering more than ten) with the exception of the Roma minority are comparatively well integrated in Slovak society • Ratification of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages • Creation of a faculty for Hungarian teachers at the university in Nitra • Using of bilingual Slovak-Hungarian, Slovak-Ruthenian, Slovak-Ukrainian and Slovak-Romany forms for the first time in census
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The situation of the Roma minority remains difficult despite further efforts across all sectors • Strengthening of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma affairs • Opening of a regional office in Eastern Slovakia where vast majority Roma live • Establishment of an informal Advisory Board with a large number of representatives from the Roma community and civil society • Beginning of Roma language codification • stablishment of an Inter-Ministerial commission for Roma Community affairs

Source: Commission 1998, 1999, 2000, Commission of the European Communities 2001, 2002

Based on the Reports of the Commission (Table 1), Slovakia has made a positive development regarding both the protection of minorities and the adoption of minority language legislation. This trend has continued even after its accession to the EU, as it is possible to see in Resolutions provided by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of

³ “The legal vacuum on the use of minority languages combined with the implementation of the State Language Law, has given rise to the following problems: In June 1997, the traditional bilingual graduation certificates were replaced by Slovak only certificates. The Ministry of Education stated on 20 January 1998 that bilingual certificates will be issued when requested from parents of national minority children but such certificates will not have official validity and will have to be paid for” (Commission, 1998).

⁴ “The law provides that persons belonging to minorities are able to use their language in official communications with public administrative organs and organs of local self-administration in those municipalities where the minority constitutes at least twenty per cent of the population.” And also „the practice of issuing bilingual school certificates for students attending Hungarian or Ruthenian language schools, which was discontinued in 1997 after having been applied for 76 years, has been renewed and the relevant laws amended” (Commission, 1999).

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Europe (Table 2) which has been monitoring the state of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities regularly by every one of its member states. On the other hand there are still various unsolved issues especially regarding the most numerous minorities within the Slovak territory – Hungarian and Roma minority. The ever remaining issues regarding Hungarian minority are mostly connected to the minority language use and regarding Roma minority are the issues mostly connected to the fact, that the Roma minority is still being excluded from the society on multiple levels.

Table: 2 State of the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Slovakia

Issue of the Resolution	Most significant conclusions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe during the monitoring period
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of an improvement in inter-community relations in particular between the Hungarian minority and other parts of the population of Slovakia • Improvement in the legal status of minority languages in official contacts
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of an anti-discrimination Act • Setting up of an Ombudsman institution • Increase in the allocation of financial support to minorities by the Ministry of Culture • Setting up of Selye János University in Komárno
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment of the anti-discrimination legislation • Extending of the competences of the national equality body • Strengthening of the legislative guarantees against sterilization without prior free and informed consent • Setting up of the mechanisms to deal with the distribution of funds in order to provide support for the preservation and development of the cultures of persons belonging to national minorities • Lively minority print and broadcast media scene in the Slovak republic

Source: Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2001, 2006, 2011

As the author has already mentioned, there has been, however, no tremendous progress observed regarding the improvement of the situation of the Roma minority. Slovak republic has been constantly advised to pay particular attention to improving the situation of the Roma and to fight discriminatory attitudes in society (Commission, 1999) by both the Commission and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Slovak republic has mostly been criticized for an existing gap between the good intentions and their actual implementation as a result of which, practical improvement in the daily life of minorities (particularly Roma minority) is very minor if not unnoticeable and at the same time in many areas national minorities (again mostly the Roma) do not make use of the rights granted due to lack of information (Commission, 2000). The frequent lack of pre-school education, teacher training which does too little to leave people able to cope with the specific needs of the Roma children, poor housing conditions, and high unemployment have largely contributed to a situation which deepens further social exclusion (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). “Overall, despite the further positive steps taken, the majority of persons belonging to the Roma community continue to be exposed to social inequalities, and continue to experience widespread discrimination in education, employment, the criminal justice system, and access to public services. Solutions are being found in selected locations, either with the support of foreign donors, or due to efficient partnerships between municipalities and NGOs. The under-representation of Roma students in the education system has persisted, hand in hand with over-representation in schools for retarded children.” (Commission of the European Communities, 2002) Therefore, the Strategy of the Slovak republic for the Integration of Roma up to 2020 has been introduced recently (For more information See Fourth Report Submitted by the Slovak republic Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 2 of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2014).

Findings of the Commission and the Council of Europe that have been summarized in the tables above together with the most current document published by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – Fourth Opinion on the Slovak Republic adopted on 3 December 2014 (See Council of Europe, 2014), serve as basis for the following analysis of current challenges of minority policy in Slovakia, since the Commission and Council of Europe are considered to be relevant sources regarding objective assessment of the steps of Slovak republic, taken in order to improve the status of minorities in society as well as the minority rights protection.

4. CURRENT CHALLENGES OF MINORITY POLICY

Based on the above provided historical overview of the minority policy forming since the establishment of the Slovak republic, the author of the paper states, that Slovakia's institutional structure pertaining to human and minority rights (which involves minority rights policy) underwent significant changes in a positive manner between 1993 and 2014. There are however still quite many limitations and remaining challenges, that need to be addressed by the Slovak authorities. Therefore according to the author of the paper, the most important ones are summarized in this part of the paper. At the same time, the author analyses, according to her opinion, two of the most important challenging issues and tries to provide a theoretical explanation of the necessity to address them on a national level.

Since there have been no significant changes observed towards eliminating the condition of citizenship for granting minority rights in 2015, the author of the paper considers as challenging for the Slovak authorities to try to formulate new conditions for granting minority rights, that would be consistent with the international law. In order to clarify the expression "consistency with the international law" the author of the paper uses conditions mentioned in the document provided by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (UN OHCHR) – *Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation* (2010). First of all the condition of citizenship for granting minority rights is inconsistent with the international law, since "it is now commonly accepted that recognition of minority status is not solely for the State to decide, but should be based on both objective and subjective criteria" (UN OHCHR, 2010) such as possession of different linguistic, ethnic or religious characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and showing, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Capotorti, 1977 In UN OHCHR, 2010). Instead of using citizenship as a distinguishing criterion that excludes some persons or groups from enjoying minority rights [...], the Commentary on the United Nations Minorities Declaration by the Working Group on Minorities suggests that "other factors can be relevant in distinguishing between the rights that can be demanded by different minorities, for example, those who have been established for a long time on the territory may have stronger rights than those who have recently arrived" (UN OHCHR, 2010). However, in order to eliminate the condition of citizenship and to formulate new conditions for granting minority rights (for instance by using the conditions suggested by Capotorti or by the UN OHCHR), the Constitution of the Slovak republic would have to be amended, which means that this change of conditions is not to be expected in a short-term period of time. The main reason for this assumption is the fact that in 2016 the parliamentary elections will take place in Slovakia and the remaining time to do such serious decisions is too short. That is why the author assumes that such a change is only to be expected in a long-period of time. Moreover, it is expected that the amended conditions will only be implemented successfully under a certain amount of pressure from the side of the international community on the Slovak authorities.

The other challenge for the minority policy would be to reword the questions in the next census that should be held in 2021, meaning not to base them on exclusive identity. This simple step would enable to provide a much clearer picture of the composition of the population in Slovak republic by nationality and would, according to the author of the paper, serve as a good basis for the continuous improvement of the minority policy in Slovak republic.

It is necessary not to omit addressing the assumption that the dynamic minority policy in Slovak republic pictures other minorities (especially Hungarian minority) as a threat to the territorial integrity of Slovakia. The other challenging task for both the Slovak authorities and the Slovak society is to better the status of the Roma minority which is still being excluded from the society on various different levels and discriminated against. The author of the paper assumes that both problems are at least partially based on the premise of perceiving minorities as a "threat" to the majority. This assumption stems from the statement of Kymlicka (2002) that ethnic relations are seen as a zero-sum game, which means that anything that benefits the minority is seen as a threat to majority. For this reason Kymlicka argues that the treatment of minorities is above all a question of national security.

The author of this paper agrees with this argument, however she stresses that while the treatment of minorities is to a great extent a question of national security and peace maintenance, based on the annual report on Minority Policy in Slovakia (Lajčáková et al., 2012), it is also necessary to take culture, cultural diversity and its protection as well as the protection of human dignity into account. In the opinion of the author of this paper, the long-term goal of the Slovak authorities should be to try to substitute (at least to some extent) the need to protect minority rights in order to protect the majority from potential threats of conflicts with the other two mentioned needs – to protect cultural diversity and human dignity of the minority groups.

In order to be able to challenge and to overcome the “securitization” of minority policy, not only steps on the state (and even higher) level have to be made, but maybe even more importantly, also change of people’s minds regarding the majority-minority relations and minority-state relations is necessary (Kymlicka 2002), which is not an easy task at all. Kymlicka (2002) also argues that this is a lot more complicated issue, which probably “can only be fully resolved by constructing viable regional structures of geo-political security, whether through inclusion of [Slovak republic together with the other] Eastern and Central Europe countries in NATO, or the construction of an alternate regional security body. But the successful negotiation and implementation of minority rights can only take place within democratic spaces that have been “desecuritized.” The problem is, that Slovak republic and many other countries from Central and Eastern Europe already are members of NATO, moreover participate on the European Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy and despite of that, the minority policy has not yet been “desecuritized”. The question therefore remains, how is it possible to achieve “desecuritized” democratic spaces where successful negotiation and implementation of minority rights can take place.

Regarding the already mentioned challenging task for both the Slovak authorities and the Slovak society, that is to better the status (mostly the socioeconomic status) of the Roma minority which is still being excluded from the society on various different levels and discriminated against, it is necessary to mention that this challenging issue is according to the author of the paper a direct result of the widely criticized existing gap between the good intentions and their actual implementation. As stated in the Table 2, the Anti-discrimination Act has been adopted in 2004 and amended several times (the last amendment took place in 2014 (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak republic - MV SR, 2014)). Despite of the fact that the Anti-discrimination Act is valid and that the Strategy of the Slovak republic for the Integration of Roma up to 2020 has already been introduced, there have been no significant changes observed yet. Moreover the Advisory Committee of the European Council expressed concern about the rise in “racist, xenophobic and extremist discourse in Europe [which includes Slovak republic as well] – including anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, anti-Roma, anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourse” in recent years (Advisory Committee, 2014). The discrimination against the Roma minority is considered to be one of the core problems behind the under education of the people belonging to Roma minority in Slovakia. There are 42,7% people belonging to Roma minority who have only finished their elementary education, 40,7% with absolutely no education and only 0,7% citizens of the Slovak republic with Roma nationality have higher education – have bachelor, master’s or doctoral degree, which is in comparison to the rest of the population in Slovak republic considered to be a highly negative phenomenon and therefore it is necessary to pay special attention to this issue (Ministry of Justice of the Slovak republic - MS SR, 2013).

The author of this paper tries to approach this problem on a theoretical basis through the explanation of the interconnectedness of cultural and social capital and their role in the society (in this case in the Slovak society). As already mentioned above, not only the under education but also high unemployment, that deliberately goes hand in hand with the low level of education has largely contributed to a situation which deepens further social exclusion of the Roma minority from the society. The theoretical explanation behind all this is that the level of cultural and social capital are highly interconnected. This means that the cultural capital, which according to Bourdieu (Ondrejko, 2011) consists of the level of education of a person (documented for example by achieved ranks, positions, titles), of intellectual competencies and physical dispositions that one gains during the process of socialization and of material assets such as books, paintings, sculptures (which always have to be connected with the appropriate cultural practices, such as active reading etc.) influences the level of social capital of the person to a great extent. In order to be able to explain the mentioned interconnectedness, the distinction between bridging and bonding social capital introduced by Putnam is necessary. Bonding social capital connects people with the same characteristics, such as ethnicity, age or social class, strengthens the identity and homogeneity of the group and bridging social capital in contrary brings together people across social characteristics (Vašečka, 2007).

Therefore the impact of the level of cultural capital on the social capital can be explained from two points of view. The negative aspect of low level of cultural capital (which is based on the explanation above, related to the under education or to the low level of education) does not enable a person (in this case a person belonging to the Roma minority) to get employed and to gain social contacts – bridging social bonds outside of his/her minority group through the employment. As a result of that, the person maintains his/her strong bonds within the minority group and is not able to reach out of the group because of the low level of cultural capital. Because of that, it is really hard for him/her to get integrated into the major society. This is happening over and over, case by case, which largely contributes to the accumulation and to the deepening of social inequalities.

On the contrary, the positive aspect of high level of cultural capital (related to the higher level of education) enables a person to get employed, moreover to gain employment for which one needs a certain qualification through which, one is able to develop new relations and social contacts even outside the group (in this case minority group). It is then much easier for him/her to integrate into the major society and to better his/her socioeconomic status.

The above provided theoretical analysis clearly is an over-simplified version of the reality and in order to be able to explain the exclusion of the Roma minority from the society on various different levels and even to provide solutions, many other factors would have to be included in the analysis, for example linguistic, cultural, maybe even religious aspects etc. but at the same time, according to the author, this analysis proved that this really is a challenging issue that has to be addressed by the Slovak authorities. Nevertheless it has also proved that the gap between the good intentions and their incorrect implementation largely contributes to both deepening and accumulation of social inequalities. Last but not least it has proved that the major cause for the social inequalities deepening is low cultural capital that is possessed by many persons in a certain group (in this case Roma minority) that contributes to the problems in finding employment, which is connected to the problems of acquiring new social ties outside the group (with the major society). This leads again to the problems of finding employment, thereby to the low social status and finally to the social exclusion. The author therefore considers the problem of unequal cultural capital accumulation to be a serious one and the one that has to be addressed by the Slovak authorities, since it can not only lead to the further deepening of the social inequalities between the Roma minority and the major society, but hypothetically even to the social conflicts between the mentioned minority and majority of the population, unrests or turmoils due to the dissatisfaction of Roma minority with their socioeconomic status.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite of the fact that overall, the minority policy in the Slovak republic underwent significant changes since the establishment of the Slovak republic, as it has been shown in this paper, it still lacks some specific features that well-functioning democratic minority policy should have. Based on the description of the current state of minorities in Slovak republic and on the historical overview of minority policy forming since the establishment of the Slovak republic, the author of this paper has been able to identify and to assess the today's most significant challenges for the minority policy of Slovak republic. Namely, the most significant challenges of the minority policy, which have been addressed in this paper are following:

- Citizenship as a condition for granting minority rights
- Census based on exclusive identity
- Perception of minorities as a threat to the territorial integrity of Slovak republic
- Exclusion of Roma minority from the society on various different levels
- Existence of a gap between the good intentions and their actual implementation.

In order to use these challenges in favour of better functioning minority policy and in favour of improvement of socioeconomic status of minorities in Slovakia as well as in favour of minority-majority relations, the author of the paper suggests some necessary steps. First of all, the condition of citizenship for granting minority rights should be replaced by other, non-discriminatory conditions that are coherent with the international law. Secondly, the census, especially questions related to the nationality should not be based on exclusive identity, in order to gain a much clearer picture of the composition of the Slovak population – stronger basis for minority policy formation. Moreover, sufficient attention (which means definitely a lot more attention than until now) should be paid to the implementation of minority policy measures. Within the scope of minority policy, there should be higher focus on guaranteeing minorities their rights because of the need for protection of culture, cultural diversity and human dignity, in order to eliminate the prevalent current approach to the minority rights, which is to guarantee minorities their rights in order to avoid threat to the majority – that means only in order to maintain peace and ensure security. Last but not least it is considered necessary to pay enough attention to the unequal cultural capital accumulation within the territory of the Slovak republic in order to avoid further deepening between the major population and minorities in Slovakia (especially Roma minority).

By providing critical analysis of the above mentioned challenges of the minority policy on a theoretical basis, the author of the paper has contributed to the current debate on the possible improvement of the minority policy in Slovakia in the light of both persistent failures to integrate Roma minority to the major society in Slovakia and of constant lack of successful implementation of minority policy measures. Despite of the fact that the paper according to the author provides solid basis for explanation of current minority policy challenges, there are a few limitations of the paper mostly taking into account the given limited scope of the paper.

One of the limitations of the paper is that the author has not been able to answer the question of “desecuritization” of the minority policy, while she considers this question to be a complex one, which needs further and deeper research. Because of this fact, she has decided to take a deeper look into this issue within the scope of her further research. In order to examine this issue deeper, it is necessary to start with the comparison of the approach of “desecuritization” of political spaces of Kymlicka and of “de-ethnicization” of political spaces regarding minority issues of Wolff, which has been formulated as a reaction to the Kymlicka’s approach. The main aim of the further research will be to try to provide alternative ways of dealing with minority issues in order to achieve better socio-economic status for minority groups and better minority-majority and minority-state relations.

The other limitation of this paper is that neither the cultural capital, nor the social capital of the Roma minority have been measured separately for the purpose of this paper. The measurement of the social and cultural capital is according to the author of the paper necessary in order to provide a proof for the results of the above realized theoretical analysis. For this reason the aim of the author of the paper within further research of this issue will be to identify all possible factors that need to be evaluated in order to be able to measure both cultural and social capital. The actual measurement of the cultural and social capital is considered to be a long-term task and regarding the data collection challenging as well. Therefore it is not to be expected to have results soon but at the same time, this task is not to be considered unfeasible.

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